Moomins

The **Moomins** (Swedish: *Mumin*) are the central characters in a series of books and a comic strip by Swedish-speaking Finnish illustrator Tove Jansson, originally published in Swedish by Schildts[2] in Finland. They are a family of white, round fairy tale characters with large snouts that make them resemble hippopotamuses. The family lives in their house in Moominvalley, though in the past, their temporary residences have included a lighthouse and a theatre. They have had many adventures along with their various friends.

In all, nine books were released in the series, together with five picture books and a comic strip being released between 1945 and 1993.

The Moomins have since been the basis for numerous television series, films and even a theme park called Moomin World in Naantali, Finland.

The Moomins

The Moomins, comic book cover by Tove Jansson

From left to right: Sniff, Snufkin, Moominpappa, Moominmamma, Moomintroll (Moomin), the Mymble's daughter, Groke, Snork Maiden and Hattifatteners

Author	Tove Jansson
Original title	*Mumintroll*
Translator	▪ To English: Elizabeth Portch, Thomas Warburton, Kingsley Hart, Ant O'Neill
Illustrator	Tove Jansson
Country	Finland
Language	Swedish[1]
Genre	Children's fantasy
Publisher	Drawn and Quarterly, Macmillan, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Schildts, Zangavar, Sort of Books
Media type	Print, digital
Website	Official website

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Synopsis and characters

The Moomin stories concern several eccentric and oddly-shaped characters, some of whom are related to each other. The central family consists of Moominpappa, Moominmamma and Moomintroll.[3]

Other characters, such as Hemulens, Sniff, the Snork Maiden, Snufkin and Little My are accepted into or attach themselves to the family group from time to time, generally living separate lives in the surrounding Moominvalley, where the series is set. It is in this fictional valley that the Moomin family decides to live at the end of *The Moomins and the Great Flood*.

Characters

- **Moomintroll**, also referred to as "Moomin" in some of the English translations: The main protagonist, the little boy of the family, interested in and excited about everything he sees and finds, always trying to be good, but sometimes getting into trouble while doing so, he is very brave and always finds a way to make his friends happy
- **Moominpappa**: Father of the family, but boyish and adventurous. He likes to be present when something unusual happens. He is philosophical at times and likes writing his memoirs.
- **Moominmamma**: The calm mother, who takes care that Moominhouse is a safe place to be. She wants everyone to be happy, appreciates individuality, but settles things when someone is wronged. She always brings good food as well as whatever else may be necessary on a journey in her handbag.
- **Little My**: A mischievous tomboyish little girl, who lives in the Moomin house and has a brave, spunky personality. She likes adventure, but loves catastrophes, and often does mean things on purpose. She finds messiness and untidiness exciting and is very down to earth when others aren't.
- **Sniff**: A creature who lives in the Moomin house. He likes to take part in everything, but is afraid to do anything dangerous. Sniff appreciates all valuables and makes many plans to get rich, but does not succeed.
- **Snork Maiden**: Moomin's girlfriend. She is happy and energetic, but often suddenly changes her mind on things. She loves nice clothes and jewelry and is a little flirtatious.
- **Snufkin**: Moomin's best friend. The lonesome philosophical traveller, who likes to play the harmonica and wanders around the world with only a few things, so as not to make his life complicated. He always comes and goes as he pleases, is carefree and has lots of admirers in Moominvalley. He is also shown to be quite fearless and calm in even the most dire situations, which has proven to be a great help to Moomintroll and the others when in danger
- The younger **Mymble**, also referred to as "**the Mymble's daughter**": Little My's amiable and helpful big sister, and half-sister of Snufkin. She often has romantic daydreams about the love of her life, particularly policemen.
- The **Snork**: Snorkmaiden's brother. He is an introvert by nature and is always inventing things. The residents of Moominvalley often ask Snork for help solving tricky problems and building machines. Snorks are like moomintrolls, but change colour according to their mood.
- **Too-Ticky**: A wise woman, and good friend of the family. She has a boyish look, with a blue hat and a red-striped shirt. She dives straight into action to solve dilemmas in a practical way. Too-Ticky is the one of the people in Moominvalley, who does not hibernate, instead spending the winter in the cozy sauna building of the Moominhouse.
- **Stinky**: A small furry creature that always plays jokes on the family in the house, where he sometimes lives. He likes pinching things, is proud of his reputation as a crook, but always gets found out. He is simple and only thinks of himself.

Biographical interpretation

Critics have interpreted various Moomin characters as being inspired by real people, especially members of the author's family, and Tove Jansson spoke in interviews about the backgrounds of, and possible models for, her characters.[4] The first two books about the Moomins were published in 1945 and 1946 respectively, and deal with natural disasters; they were influenced by the upheavals of war and Jansson's depression during the war years.[5]

Tove Jansson's life partner was the graphic artist Tuulikki Pietilä, whose personality inspired the character Too-Ticky in *Moominland Midwinter*.[4][6] Moomintroll and Little My have been seen as psychological self-portraits of the artist.[4][6] The Moomins, generally speaking, relate strongly to Jansson's own family – they were bohemian, lived close to nature and were very tolerant towards diversity.[4][6][7] Moominpappa and Moominmamma are often seen as portraits of Jansson's parents Viktor Jansson and Signe Hammarsten-Jansson[4][6][7] Most of Jansson's characters are on the verge of melancholy, such as the always formal Hemulen, or the strange Hattifatteners, who travel in concerted, ominous groups. Jansson uses the differences between the characters' philosophies to provide a venue for her satirical impulses.[8]

List of books

The books in the series, in order, are:

1. *The Moomins and the Great Flood* (Originally: *Småtrollen och den stora översvämningen*) – 1945.

2. *Comet in Moominland* (Originally: *Kometjakten*/*Kometen kommer*) – 1946.
3. *Finn Family Moomintroll*, Some editions: *The Happy Moomins* – (Originally: *Trollkarlens hatt*) – 1948.
4. *The Exploits of Moominpappa*, Some editions: *Moominpappa's Memoirs* (Originally: *Muminpappans bravader*/*Muminpappans memoarer)* – 1950.
5. *Moominsummer Madness* (Originally: *Farlig midsommar*) – 1954.
6. *Moominland Midwinter* (Originally: *Trollvinter*) – 1957.
7. *Tales from Moominvalley* (Originally: *Det osynliga barnet*) – 1962 (Short stories).
8. *Moominpappa at Sea* (Originally: *Pappan och havet*) – 1965.
9. *Moominvalley in November* (Originally: *Sent i november*) – 1970 (In which the Moomin family is absent).

All of the books in the main series except *The Moomins and the Great Flood* (Originally: *Småtrollen och den stora översvämningen*) were translated and published in English during the 1960s and 70s. This first book would eventually be translated into English in 2005 by David McDuff and published by Schildts of Finland for the 60th anniversary of the series. A later 2012 version of the same translation featuring Jansson's new preface to the 1991 Scandinavian printing, was published in Britain by *Sort Of Books*,[9] and was more widely distributed.

Moomin House in Moomin World, Naantali, Finland

There are also five Moomin picture books by Tove Jansson:

1. *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and Little My* (Originally: *Hur gick det sen?*) – 1952.
2. *Who Will Comfort Toffle?* (Originally: *Vem ska trösta knyttet?*) – 1960.
3. *The Dangerous Journey* (Originally: *Den farliga resan*) – 1977.
4. *Skurken i Muminhuset* (English: *Villain in the Moominhouse*) – 1980.
5. *Visor från Mumindalen* (English: *Songs from Moominvalley*) – 1993 (No English translation published).

The first official translation of *Villain in the Moominhouse* by Tove Jansson historian Ant O'Neill was premiered in a reading at the ArchWay With Words literary festival on 25th September 2017.[10]

The books and comic strips have been translated from their original Swedish and English respectively into many languages. The Book about Moomin, Mymble and Little My is the first Moomin book to be adapted for iPad.

The comic strip

The Moomins also appeared in the form of comic strips. Their first appearance was in 1947 in the children's section of the *Ny Tid* newspaper,[11] and they were introduced internationally to English readers in 1954 in the popular London newspaper *The Evening News*.[12][13] Tove Jansson drew and wrote all the strips until 1959. She shared the work load with her brother Lars Jansson until 1961; after that he took over the job until 1975 when the last strip was released.[14]

Drawn and Quarterly, a Canadian graphic novel publisher, released reprints of all *The Evening News* strips created by both Tove and Lars Jansson beginning in October 2006.[15] The first five volumes, *Moomin: The Complete Tove Jansson Comic Strip* have been published, whilst the sixth volume, published in May 2011, began *Moomin: The Complete Lars Jansson Comic Strip*. The 2015 publication *Moomin: The Deluxe Anniversary Edition* collected all of Tove's work.

In the 1990s, a comic book version of Moomin was produced in Scandinavia after Dennis Livson and Lars Jansson's animated series was shown on television. Neither Tove nor Lars Jansson had any involvement in these comic books; however, in the wake of the series, two new Moomin comic strips were launched under the artistic and content oversight of Lars and his daughter, Sophia Jansson-Zambra. Sophia now provides sole oversight for the strips.[12]

TV series and films

The story of the Moomins has been made into television series on many occasions by various groups, the most recent of which is a Japanese–Dutch collaboration, that has also produced a feature-length film. However, there are also two Soviet serials, puppet animation *Mumi-troll* (*Moomintroll*) and cutout animation *Shlyapa Volshebnika* (*Magician's Hat*) of three parts each, and the Polish–Austrian puppet animation TV series, *The Moomins*, which was broadcast and became popular in an edited form in the United Kingdom in the 1980s.

The two newest feature films re-use the footage of the Polish-Austrian series: *Moomin and Midsummer Madness* had its release in 2008, and in 2010 the Moomins appear in the first Nordic 3-D film production, with the title song by Björk, in *Moomins and the Comet Chase*. The recent animated film titled *Moomins on the Riviera* is based on Moomin comic strip story *Moomin on the Riviera* and has been first released on 10 October 2014 in Finland[16] and made premiere on 11 October 2014 at BFI London Film Festival in United Kingdom.[17] In an October 2014 blog article at Screendaily, Sophia Jansson states that the film's "artistic team has made an effort to be true to the original drawings and the original text".[18]

The Moomins, from the 1990–91 television animation. From left to right, Sniff, Moominmamma, Moominpappa, Moomintroll (Moomin) and Little My

- *Die Muminfamilie* (*The Moomin Family*) 1959 West German marionette TV series, and its 1960 sequel *Sturm im Mumintal* (*Storm in Moominvalley*)
- *Mūmin* (*Moomin*), 1969–70 Japanese traditional animation TV series
- *Mumintrollet* (*Moomintroll*), 1969 Swedish-language Finnish suit actor TV series
- *Shin Mūmin* (*New Moomin*), 1972 Japanese traditional animation TV series, remake of the 1969 series by the staff of its latter half
- *Mūmin* (*Moomin*), 1971 Japanese traditional animation film
- *Mūmin* (*Moomin*), 1972 Japanese traditional animation half-hour film[19]
- *Mumindalen* (*Moominvalley*), 1973 Swedish suit actor TV series based on Moominland Midwinter
- *Mumi-troll* (*Moomintroll*), 1978 Soviet Union stop motion serial film of *Comet in Moominland*
- *Opowiadania Muminków* (*The Moomins*), 1977–82 Austrian, German and Polish-produced 'Fuzzy Felt" stop motion TV series made in Poland. The series has been re-compiled a number of times in other formats:
  - *Moomin and Midsummer Madness*, 2008 Finnish-produced compilation movie of the TV series[20]
  - *Moomins and the Comet Chase*, 2010 Finnish-produced 3-D film compiled and converted from the 1977–82 series[21]
  - *Moomins and the Winter Wonderland*, 2017, from the TV series.
  - *The Moomins*, 2010 Finnish-produced high-definition video version of the 1977–82 series
- *Vem ska trösta knyttet?*, 1980 Swedish traditional animation half-hour film of *Who Will Comfort Toffle?*
- *Shlyapa Volshebnika* (*Magician's Hat*), 1980–83 Soviet Union cutout animation serial film of *Finn Family Moomintroll*, different staff and aesthetic to the 1978 serial
- *Tanoshii Mūmin Ikka* (*Moomin*), 1990–91 Dutch, Finnish and Japanese-produced traditional animation TV series made in Japan
  - *Tanoshii Mūmin Ikka: Bōken Nikki* (*Delightful Moomin Family: Adventure Diary*), 1991–92 Dutch and Japanese-produced traditional animation TV series made in Japan, a continuation of the 1990–91 series
  - *Tanoshii Mūmin Ikka: Mūmindani no Suisei* (*Comet in Moominland*), 1992 Dutch and Japanese-produced traditional animation feature film made in Japan, a prequel to the 1990–91 series
- *Hur gick det sen?* (*What Happened Next?*), 1993 Swedish short animation film of *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and Little My*
- *Փոքրիկ տրոլների կյանքից* (*From the Life Of the Little Trolls*), 2008 Armenian short animation film based on *The Last Dragon In the World (Historien om den sista draken i världen)*[32]
- *Moomins on the Riviera*, 2014 French hand-drawn animated feature film, with a plot line taken from the comic strip.
- *Moominvalley*, 2019 Finnish and British-produced TV series, directed by Oscar-winner Steve Box. A crowdfunded campaign was made on April 19, 2017 to make a new "TV-series Moominvalley". Archived from the original on 2017-03-29. by Finnish company "Gutsy Animations". It successfully passed the campaign threshold.

Moomin music

The Moomin novels describe the musical activities of the Moomins, particularly those of Snufkin, his harmonica with "trills" and "twiddles". All Moomin characters sing songs, often about their thoughts and themselves. The songs often serve as core statements of the characters' personalities.

Original songs

This music was heard outside Moominvalley after they went live on theater stage in Stockholm. Director Vivica Bandler told Jansson in 1959: "Listen, here the people want songs".[23] The earlier version of the play was cast in Helsinki with no music.

The Moomin Voices CD release from 2003, arranged by Mika Pohjola, in Swedish containing Tove Jansson's original Moomin songs. A Finnish version was released in 2005.

Helsinki based pianist and composer, Erna Tauro was commissioned to write the songs to lyrics by Jansson. The first collection consisted of six Moomin Songs (*Sex muminvisor*): Moomintroll's Song (*Mumintrollets visa*), Little My's Song (*Lilla Mys visa*), Mrs. Fillyjonk's Song (*Fru Filifjonks sång*), Theater Rat Emma's Words of Wisdom (*Teaterråttan Emmas visdomsord*), Misabel's Lament (*Misans klagolåt*) and Final Song (*Slutsång*).

More songs were published in the 1960s and 1970s, when Jansson and Lars Jansson produced a series of Moomin dramas for Swedish Television. The simple, yet effective melodies by Tauro were well received by the theater and TV audiences. The first songs were either sung unaccompanied or accompanied by a pianist. While the most famous Moomin songs in Scandinavia are undoubtedly "Moomintroll's Song" and "Little My's Song", they appear in no context in the novels.

The original songs by Jansson and Tauro remained scattered after their initial release. The first recording of the complete collection was made in 2003 by composer and arranger Mika Pohjola on the *Moomin Voices* CD (*Muminröster* in Swedish), as a tribute to the late Tove Jansson. Tauro had died in June 1993 and some of Jansson's last lyrics were composed by Pohjola in cooperation with Jansson's heirs. Pohjola was also the arranger of all songs for a vocal ensemble and chamber orchestra. All voices were sung by Åland native vocalist, Johanna Grüssner. The same recording has been released in a Finnish version in 2005, *Muumilauluja*. The Finnish lyrics were translated by Kirsi Kunnas and Vexi Salmi.[24]

The Swedish and Finnish recordings of Moomin Voices, and their respective musical scores, have been used as course material at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts.[24]

The Moomin Voices Live Band (aka. *Muumilauluja-bändi*) is dedicated to exclusively performing the original lyrics and unaltered stories by Tove Jansson. This band is led by Pohjola on piano, with vocalists Mirja Mäkelä and Eeppi Ursin.[25]

Other musical adaptations

Independent musical interpretations of the Moomins have been made for the nineties anime, by Pierre Kartner, with translated versions being made including in Poland and the Nordic countries. Their lyrics, however, often contain simple slogans and the music is written in a children's pop music style and contrast sharply with the original Moomin novels and Jansson's pictorial and descriptive yet rhyming lyricism, as well as Erna Tauro's Scandinavian-style songs (*visor*), which are occasionally influenced by Kurt Weill.

A Moomin opera was written in 1974 by the Finnish composer Ilkka Kuusisto; Jansson designed the costumes.[26]

Musicscapes from Moominvalley is a four-part work based on the Moomin compositions of composer and producer Heikki Mäenpää. It was created on the basis of the original Moomin works for the Tampere Art Museum.[27]

Twenty new Moomin songs were produced in Finland by Timo Poijärvi and Ari Vainio in 2006. This Finnish album contains no original lyrics by Jansson. However, it is based on the novel, Comet in Moominland, and adheres to the original stories. The songs are performed by Samuli Edelmann, Sani, Tommi Läntinen, Susanna Haavisto and Jore Marjaranta and other established Finnish vocalists in the pop/entertainment genre. The same twenty compositions are also available as standalone multimedia CD postcards.

The Icelandic singer Björk has composed and performed the title song (Comet Song) for the film Moomins and the Comet Chase (2010). The lyrics were written by the Icelandic writer Sjón.

Hattifatteners[28] is an art project created by Russian composer Lex Plotnikoff and photographer Tisha Razumovsky. The project consists of 31 ambient/new-age music tracks and many photos of moomin characters models.

Theatre

Several stage productions have been made from Jansson's Moomin series, including a number that Jansson herself was involved in.

The earliest production was a 1949 theatrical version of *Comet in Moominland* performed at Åbo Svenska Teater.[26]

In the early 1950s, Jansson collaborated on Moomin-themed children's plays with Vivica Bandler. By 1958, Jansson began to become directly involved in theater as Lilla Teater produced *Troll i kulisserna* (*Troll in the wings*), a Moomin play with lyrics by Jansson and music composed by Erna Tauro. The production was a success, and later performances were held in Sweden and Norway,[6] including recently at the Malmö Opera and Music Theatre in 2011.[29]

Theme parks and displays

Moomin World

Moomin World (*Muumimaailma* in Finnish, *Muminvärlden* in Swedish) is the Moomin Theme Park especially for children. Moomin World is located on the island of Kailo beside the old town of Naantali, near the city of Turku in Western Finland.

Edward the Boobleand the bathing hut, at Moominworld

The blueberry-coloured Moomin House is the main attraction; tourists are allowed to freely visit all five stories. It is also possible to see the Hemulen's yellow house, Moominmama's kitchen, the Fire Station, Snufkin's Camp, Moominpappa's boat, etc. Visitors may also meet Moomin characters there. Moomin World opens for the Summer season.

First announced in 2013, a new Moomin theme park is set to open in 2019 at Lake Miyazawa, Hannō, in Saitama Prefecture northwest of Tokyo, Japan. There will be two zones: the free Metsä Village area, comprising lakefront restaurants and shops set among natural activities, and the Moomin-themed zone offering attractions like Moominhouse and an art museum.[30]

Tampere Art Museum

The Moominvalley of the Tampere Art Museum is a museum devoted to the original works of Tove Jansson. It contains around 2,000 works. The museum is based on the Moomin books and has many original Moomin illustrations by Tove Jansson. The gem of the collection is a blue five-storey model of the Moominhouse, which had Tove Jansson as one of its builders. As a birthday present, the 20-year-old museum received a soundscape work based on the works of Tove Jansson, called Musicscapes from Moominvalley

Interactive playroom

An interactive playroom about the Moomins was located at Scandinavia House, New York City, from November 11, 2006, till March 31, 2007.[31][32]

Akebono Children's Forest Park

Akebono Children's Forest Park (あけぼの子どもの森公園 *Akebono Kodomo no Mori Kōen*), also called "Moomin Valley", is a Moomin themed park for children in Hannō, Saitama in Japan that opened in July 1997.[33][34]

Moomin shops

As of January 2019, there are 20 MOOMIN SHOPS around the world, offering an extensive range of Moomin-themed goods. Finland, home of the Moomins, has three stores. There are two stores in the UK, one in the USA, six in Japan. China and Hong Kong each have one store. There are three in South Korea and three in Thailand.[35]

Moomin Shop at Helsinki Airport

Moomin Cafes

As of January 2018, there are 15 themed Moomin Cafes around the world – Finland, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, South Korea and Taiwan[36] – allowing diners to immerse themselves in the Moomin world. Diners can enjoy Moomin-inspired meals sitting at tables with larger-than-life plush versions of Moomin characters.[37]

Success in popular culture

The Moomin Boom

Finnair MD-11 decorated with Moomin characters serving the Japanese route

The Moomin Boom (*muumibuumi* in Finnish) started in the 1990s, when Dennis Livson and Lars Jansson produced a 104-part animation series in Japan named *Tales From Moominvalley*, which was followed by a full-length movie *Comet in Moominland*. Moomin books had always been steady bestsellers in Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, but the animation started a new Moomin madness both in Finland and abroad, especially in Japan, where they are the official mascots of the Daiei chain of shopping centers. A large merchandising industry was built around the Moomin characters, covering everything from coffee cups and T-shirts to plastic models. Even the former Finnish President Tarja Halonen has been known to wear a Moomin watch.[38] New Moomin comic books and comic strips were published. Moomins were used to advertise Finland abroad: the Helsinki-Vantaa International Airport was decorated with Moomin images and Finnair decorated its aircraft on routes to Japan with Moomin designs. The peak of the Moomin Boom was the opening of the Moomin World theme park in Naantali, Finland, which has become one of Finland's international tourist destinations.

The Moomin Boom has been criticized for commercializing the Moomins. Friends of Tove Jansson and many old Moomin enthusiasts have stressed that the animations banalize the original and philosophical Moomin world to harmless family entertainment. An antithesis for the Disneyland-like Moomin World theme park is the Moomin Museum of Tampere, which exhibits the original illustrations and hand-made Moomin models by Tove Jansson.

The Jansson family has kept the rights of Moomins and controlled the Moomin Boom. The artistic control is now in the hands of Lars Jansson's daughter, Sophia Jansson-Zambra. Wanting to keep the control over Moomins, the family has turned down offers from the Walt Disney Company.[5]

The Moomin brand is estimated to have a yearly retail value of 700 million EU per year.[39]

See also

- List of Moomin characters
- *Moomin* (1990 TV series)

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External links

- Official English website
- Official Finnish website
- Official Japanese website
- The Moomin Trove collection of Moomin book editions
- Unofficial Moomin Character Guide
- Moomin at Helsinki publisher Schildts (archived 2010-01-15)
- Moomintrolls at Macmillan, the US publisher
- Official Website of Moomin Museum in Tampere, Finland
- Zangavar Books, the Russian publisher of 'Moomin'
- IMDb Mumindalen suit actor series (1973)
- Umami 29.3.2009: A trip to the moomins birthplace

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This page was last edited on 26 April 2019, at 02:18 (UTC).

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